

Multi-Agency Permitting Teams Concept Paper

Peter Downey – WSDOT

Scott Boettcher - WSDOE

Greg Hueckel – WDFW

Background

With the passage of new transportation revenue tied to specific projects, new efforts are needed to ensure accountability and timely project delivery for all transportation projects. TPEAC created and piloted several new processes to streamline project permitting. These processes need to be scaled and adapted to the needs of less complex/more routine project types, so as to ensure the demands for accountability and timely project delivery are met across the entire transportation project delivery spectrum (e.g., preservation projects, routine projects, large/complex projects, etc.).

WSDOT, WSDOE, and WDFW have been working for the past few weeks to develop a project-delivery organizing framework as a model with which to apply the processes and tools developed in TPEAC across the entire spectrum of projects the state is now charged with delivering. In particular, the agencies have spent considerable time fleshing out the concept of multi-agency permitting teams as a key way to ensure the demands for accountability and timely project delivery are met for less complicated types of projects.

The following further describes the multi-agency permitting team concept.

Multi-Agency Permitting Team Concept

A Multi-Agency Permitting Team (MAP Team) will be created to apply Interdisciplinary Team concepts to a broader set of smaller, less complex projects. This team will consist of representatives from regulatory agencies and WSDOT all housed in the same office. The team will be given a set of projects to permit over the course of a year and will be responsible for meeting project timelines and permitting requirements. These projects will be located in limited geographical area (e.g. northwest Washington, central Puget Sound, etc.). The team will set schedules for permit delivery to ensure that project advertisement dates are met. This team is not envisioned as a policy generating body, but as a set of technical experts that will expedite permitting for transportation projects. Ground rules governing conduct and interagency agreements will be created to ensure a common understanding of the team's role. Conflicts that cannot be resolved in a timely manner within the team will be elevated for resolution through the respective agencies. The target date for the first MAPT to be up and running is September 1, 2003.

MAP Team Structure

This team will consist of:

- a WSDOT Team Manager;
- a WSDOT Permit Coordinator;
- a WDFW hydraulics engineer;
- a WDFW a permit biologist; and

- a WSDOE permit specialists in Coastal Zone Management requirements, state Shorelines Management requirements, federal and state wastewater discharge requirements, and federal and state 401 water quality certification requirements, and
- a WSDOE permit specialist in federal and state stormwater management requirements,
- a WSDOE permit specialist in federal and state wetlands protection and management requirements.

Additionally, effort will be made to bring representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA Fisheries, and USFWS to the team. These agencies have not been part of the initial discussions, but their involvement is imperative to the success of the MAP Team concept. See the attached organization chart.

Team members must be well versed in the regulations for which they are ensuring compliance. The MAP Team concept is dependent on having an interdisciplinary approach to permitting. This does not mean that agencies can expand their regulatory authority, but that expertise will be coordinated to expedite permit delivery. With the exception of the Team Manager, team members will be at a Transportation Planning Specialist 4, Environmental Specialist 4 level or equivalent. Team members will formally report to their respective agencies. Team members are expected to ensure that each transportation project meets environmental regulations.

The Team Manager's role is to provide leadership and oversight for the team, ensure that project schedules are met, and resolve minor issues within the team. The Team Manager will be responsible for measuring and reporting on the team's performance. The Team Manager should coordinate performance measurement with WSDOT's Environmental Management System, which is under development. The Team Manager will also be responsible for replicating the success of the initial MAP Team to other MAP Teams created around the state.

The WSDOT Permit Coordinator position will be filled by a WSDOT regional employee that has established relationships with the region's project engineers, design staff, and environmental staff. This position will coordinate information needs and responses between the MAP Team and regional design, projects engineers, and environmental offices.

WDFW positions on the MAP Team will have the necessary expertise and be empowered to make permit decisions. These positions will coordinate with the regional biologists and engineers. WSDOE team members will likewise have the necessary expertise and be empowered to make permit decision.

Team members will spend most of their time working with teammates in the MAP Team office. However, it is expected team members may need to spend a minor amount of time at their respective agencies for coordination, training or other administrative functions.

MAP Team Resource Needs

While many options exist for locating the team, WSDOT regional staff would prefer that the team be located in proximity to the WSDOT Design Office responsible for the set of projects. This will enable quicker response to project design questions and detailed information. This location should also be part of a larger office to take advantage of existing administrative support. Otherwise administrative support personnel may need to be hired.

Intergovernmental agreements must be created to provide budget for staff, determine deliverables, and establish ground rules for team members. Ground rules may include requirements that staff do not work out of their realm of expertise, that staff may only enforce existing rules and regulations, that staff will not work on new policy initiatives, and that staff will work within the team to resolve issues and those issues that cannot be resolved at the team level will be elevated by the Team Manager to appropriate supervisors in each agency.

Funding for the first MAP Team will be provided in part with TPEAC funds and in part with transportation project dollars. Staff and overhead needs will be better established in the next few weeks and an accurate budget and funding mechanism will be established. Target Date to resolve resource needs and levels is July 15, 2003.

WSDOT regions will identify projects to be included on the MAP Team's list.

MAP Team Relationship to TPEAC

The MAP Team is not a TPEAC subcommittee but is the application of TPEAC processes. As such, TPEAC funds will be used to help establish the first MAP Team. Subsequent teams will be supported by WSDOT project funds. The MAP Team Manager will make regular reports to TPEAC on progress and issues faced by the team.

The MAP Team's list of projects may include some of the pilot project identified by TPEAC as part of the ten projects required in the budget proviso. However, the MAP Team will not be limited to the TPEAC pilots.